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FOR

**Method, Apparatus and System for Management of Multicast Routes for a Plurality of  
Routing Protocols in a Network Device**

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# METHOD, APPARATUS AND SYSTEM FOR MANAGEMENT OF MULTICAST ROUTES FOR A PLURALITY OF ROUTING PROTOCOLS IN A NETWORK DEVICE

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## CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This patent application may be related to the following commonly-owned United States Patent Application, which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety:

United States Patent Application No. XX/XXX,XXX, entitled **METHOD FOR SYNCHRONIZATION OF MULTICAST ROUTING TABLE CHANGES WITH A PLURALITY OF MULTICAST ROUTING PROTOCOLS**, filed on even date herewith in the names of Janet Doong and Richard Crump (Attorney Docket No. 2204/A44).

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention generally relates to communication networks and, more particularly, the invention relates to the management of multicast routing information for a plurality of routing protocols in a network device.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Communication networks may be used to transport information from an information provider to one or more different consumers. A technique known as “multicasting” may be used to send information from an information provider to a select group of consumers over the communication network. Multicasting allows the information provider to transmit a packet of multicast information (herein referred to as a “multicast packet”) simultaneously to all consumers in the multicast group. The multicast packet is addressed to the multicast group using a multicast address. Examples of applications that use multicasting are sending an e-mail message to a mailing list, teleconferencing and videoconferencing.

Figure 1 is a block diagram of an exemplary prior art network device 107, such as a router, in a multicast communication network. When a multicast packet 102 is received by the router 107 from a network 101 to be forwarded, the routes associated with the multicast packet need to be determined by the router 107. The router runs a multicast routing protocol associated with the multicast packet to determine the next hop for the multicast packet based

on the multicast packet's address information. Examples of multicast routing protocols are Distance Vector Multicast Routing Protocol (DVMRP), Multiprotocol extensions to Border Gateway Protocol (MBGP), Multicast Open Shortest Path First (MOSPF), and Protocol Independent Multicast (PIM). As shown in Figure 1, each multicast routing protocol supported by the router 107 typically has its own independently maintained routing table 103-105 that stores the multicast routes known to the specific multicast routing protocol. Each supported multicast routing protocol maintains its own routing table by exchanging route update messages through its own multicast networks. Some multicast routing protocols, such as MOSPF and PIM, also make use of unicast routes from the unicast protocols supported by the router 107. The supported unicast routing protocols have a unicast routing table 106, as shown in Figure 1, that stores the unicast routes known to the unicast routing protocols supported by the router. Examples of unicast routing protocols are Border Gateway Protocol (BGP), Open Shortest Path First (OSPF) and Routing Information Protocol (RIP).

As mentioned above, when a multicast packet is received by the router 107 to be forwarded, the router 107 needs to determine the routes associated with the multicast packet. The multicast routing protocol associated with the multicast packet will determine the order in which the multicast routing tables 103-105, as well as the unicast routing table if necessary, are accessed and searched to determine the desired route or routes for the multicast packet. Often, each multicast routing table 103-105, as well as the unicast routing table, must be accessed and searched to determine the correct route or routes for the multicast packet. Performing multiple searches involves a significant amount of logic and processing time. In addition, when more than one multicast routing protocol is supported by the router, additional interoperability logic is required to enable the different multicast routing protocols to exchange routing information. The interoperability logic permits one multicast routing protocol to import the routing information of the other multicast routing protocols so that the multicast routing protocol may propagate the other routing protocols' routes in its own network domain.

## SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In accordance with one aspect of the invention, a method for aggregating and maintaining routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network

device that includes a routing table for each of the plurality of multicast routing protocols, includes receiving routes submitted by each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols. The routes received are stored in a single multicast routing table. The multicast routing table is updated based on changes made by the plurality of multicast routing protocols to the routes stored in each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols. In one embodiment, the method further includes sorting the routes stored in the multicast routing table based on routing protocol type.

In a further embodiment, the method further includes selecting a set of unicast routes from a unicast routing table and storing the set of unicast routes in a memory buffer. The set of unicast routes are then transferred from the memory buffer to the multicast routing table. In yet another embodiment, transferring the set of unicast routes includes modifying the set of unicast routes based on a set of predetermined criteria. The set of unicast routes to be injected may be selected based on the unicast routing protocol associated with each unicast route in the unicast routing table.

In accordance with another aspect of the invention, an apparatus for aggregating and maintaining routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network device includes receiving logic for receiving routes submitted by each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols. The device further includes a multicast routing table for storing the routes received from each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols. Multicast routing table management logic updates the multicast routing table based on changes made by the plurality of multicast routing protocols to the routes stored in each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols. In one embodiment, the multicast routing table management logic includes sorting logic for sorting the routes in the multicast routing table based on routing protocol.

In a further embodiment, the apparatus further includes a memory buffer for storing a set of unicast routes selected from a unicast routing table. The set of unicast routes are transferred from the memory buffer to the multicast routing table. In yet another embodiment, a policy filter is coupled to the memory buffer and the multicast routing table. The policy filter may be used to modify the set of unicast routes based on a set of predetermined criteria. The set of unicast routes may be selected based on the unicast routing protocol associated with each unicast route in the unicast routing table.

In accordance with yet another aspect of the invention, a method for injecting unicast routes from a unicast routing table into a multicast routing table in a network device of a multicast communication network includes selecting a set of unicast routes from the unicast routing table. The set of unicast routes are stored in a memory buffer and then transferred from the memory buffer to the multicast routing table. In one embodiment, transferring the set of unicast routes includes modifying the set of unicast routes based on a set of predetermined criteria.

In accordance with a further embodiment of the invention, an apparatus for injecting unicast routes from a unicast routing table into a multicast routing table in a network device includes selection logic for selecting a set of unicast routes from the unicast routing table. The set of unicast routes are stored in a memory buffer. Transferring logic transfers the set of unicast routes from the memory buffer to the multicast routing table. In one embodiment, the transferring logic includes a policy filter for modifying the set of unicast routes based on a set of predetermined criteria.

In yet another embodiment, a communication system is provided comprising at least one multicast device for forwarding multicast packets using a plurality of multicast protocols. The multicast device includes a single multicast routing table for storing multicast routes for the plurality of multicast protocols. Multicast routing table management logic updates the multicast routing table based on changes made by the plurality of routing protocols to the routes stored in the multicast routing table. The multicast routing table may also store unicast routes related to the plurality of multicast routing protocols.

In accordance with another further embodiment of the invention, a management information base (MIB) for a multicast routing table manager provides management objects for configuring and controlling the multicast routing table manager. The MIB includes management objects for defining a multicast routing table manager including a multicast routing table for storing routes for a plurality of multicast routing protocols. The multicast routing table manager management objects include, among other things, the state of the multicast routing table, the maximum number of routes in the multicast routing table and the total number of routes in the multicast routing table. The MIB also includes management objects for defining a set of rules for the injection of routes into the multicast routing table. The injection rules management objects include, among other things, a rule index number, a

rule name, whether to accept or ignore a route and a preference for the rule.

Further embodiments of the invention are implemented as a computer program product having a computer useable medium with computer readable program code thereon. The computer readable code may be read and utilized by the computer system in accordance with conventional processes.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and other objects and advantages of the invention will be appreciated more fully from the following further description thereof with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

Figure 1 is a schematic block diagram of an exemplary prior art network device in a multicast communication network.

Figure 2 is a schematic block diagram of a network device including an apparatus for managing routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 3 illustrates an exemplary entry in a memory buffer used to transfer unicast routes to a multicast routing table in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 4 illustrates the flow of control of a method for managing routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols using multicast and unicast routes in a network device in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 5 illustrates the flow of control of a method for selecting and injecting unicast routes into a multicast routing table in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figures 6A-6G show an exemplary management information base for managing a multicast routing table manager in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

## DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

An embodiment of the invention aggregates and maintains routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network device using a multicast routing table manager ("MRTM") that controls a single multicast routing table. Each multicast routing protocol maintains its own routing table that stores the routes known to the particular multicast routing protocol. In addition, the network device includes a unicast routing table

that stores the unicast routes known to each unicast routing protocol supported by the network device. The routes from each independently maintained multicast routing table are submitted to the MRTM that then stores the multicast routes in the MRTM multicast routing table. The unicast routes are selectively injected into the MRTM multicast routing table using a memory  
5 buffer and a policy filter. In this manner, the routes for each supported multicast and unicast routing protocol are advantageously stored in a single routing table, the MRTM multicast routing table. When the network device receives a multicast packet to be forwarded, only the MRTM multicast routing table must be accessed and searched to determine the desired route or routes for the multicast packet.

10 Figure 2 is a schematic block diagram of a network device including an apparatus for managing routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols. The router 200 receives multicast packets from a previous network device and forwards the multicast packets to the next hop of the desired route for the multicast packet.

Router 200 supports a plurality of multicast routing protocols. As discussed above, a  
15 multicast routing protocol, such as DVMRP and MBGP, maintains its own routing table that stores the multicast routes known to the multicast routing protocol. Accordingly, router 200 will include an independently maintained routing table 201-203 for each multicast routing protocol supported by the router. In addition, router 200 includes a unicast routing table 204 that stores unicast routes for each unicast routing protocol supported by the router, such as,  
20 for example, RIP or OSPF. As mentioned above with respect to Figure 1, some multicast routing protocols, such as MOSPF and PIM, make use of unicast routes, as well as multicast routes. The unicast routing table 204 is controlled by unicast routing table management logic (RTM) 205.

When router 200 receives a multicast packet to be forwarded, the multicast routing  
25 protocol associated with the multicast packet determines the best route or routes for the multicast packet. The multicast routing protocol determines the desired route or routes for the multicast packet by accessing and searching the multicast routing protocol routing tables 201-203 and the unicast routing table 204, if necessary. As discussed previously, often more than one routing table will need to be searched in order to locate the best route or routes.  
30 Searching multiple routing tables requires a significant amount of processing time and logic. In order to efficiently access and search the routes known by each supported multicast and

unicast routing protocol, router 200 advantageously includes a multicast routing table manager (MRTM) 208 and an associated MRTM routing table 210. The MRTM routing table 210 stores the multicast routes from each multicast protocol routing table 201-203, as well as selected unicast routes from the unicast routing table 204. In this manner, the MRTM provides a common location where all multicast routing protocol routing information may be obtained. The MRTM routing table may be used by each supported multicast routing protocol to access and exchange information with the other supported multicast routing protocols. When the router 200 forwards a multicast packet, only the MRTM routing table 210 must be searched to determine the desired route or routes for the multicast packet.

The content of the MRTM routing table 210 is controlled by the MRTM 208 in conjunction with an application program interface (API) 209 and a management information base (MIB) (not shown). Each multicast protocol routing table 201-203 submits its multicast routes directly to the MRTM 208 via the API 209. The API 209, in connection with the MRTM 208, provides the processes and logic to insert routes into the MRTM routing table, delete routes from the MRTM routing table and change routes in the MRTM routing table. As the routes, multicast or unicast, in the MRTM routing table are changed (*i.e.* updated, added or deleted), each multicast routing protocol using the MRTM routing table will be notified of such change. An exemplary method for synchronizing any route changes in the MRTM routing table with the plurality of multicast routing protocols using the MRTM routing table is discussed in co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. \_\_\_\_\_, attorney docket number 2204/A44, filed on even date herewith, entitled "Method and Apparatus for Synchronization of Multicast Routing Table Changes with a Plurality of Multicast Routing Protocols," which is hereby incorporated by reference.

When a multicast route is submitted to the MRTM 208 via the API 209, the MRTM 208 will determine whether the multicast route should be added, deleted or updated. The MRTM 208 searches the existing MRTM routing table 210 to determine if the submitted multicast route already has an entry in the MRTM routing table 210. If an entry for the specific multicast route already exists, the MRTM 208 will update the route entry with any changes to the parameters of the multicast route. If an entry for the specific multicast route does not exist and the route weight associated with the multicast route is not unreachable, then a new entry is created in the MRTM routing table 210 for the submitted route. A route



will be removed from the MRTM routing table when the network associated with the route becomes unreachable.

When a route entry is added to the MRTM routing table 210, the MRTM 208 sorts the route submitted based on the address of the route and the type of routing protocol associated with the route. A preference is associated with each routing protocol. The route entries of the MRTM routing table 210 are stored in descending order based on preference, i.e., which route is a preferred path. In addition, the MRTM 208 will identify the best route based on the preferences associated with each routing protocol.

As mentioned above, when a submitted multicast route is added to the MRTM routing table 210, a route entry is created to store the routing information associated with the submitted multicast route. In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, an entry in the MRTM routing table includes information such as, the IP address of the route source network, the IP address of the next hop of the route, the current route state, the current route metric and the routing protocol associated with the route.

The MRTM routing table 210 may also include selected unicast routes from the unicast routing table 204. As discussed previously, some multicast routing protocols make use of unicast routes, as well as multicast routes. The unicast routing table 204, however, does not directly submit its routes to the MRTM routing table 210. Alternatively, the unicast routes are selectively injected into the MRTM routing table 210 using a memory buffer 206 and a policy filter 207 coupled between the unicast routing table 204 and the MRTM routing table 210.

The memory buffer 206 is used to transfer the best unicast routes from the unicast routing table 204 to the MRTM routing table 210. In one embodiment, the memory buffer 206 is a FIFO. The MRTM 208 requests from the RTM 205 a set of unicast routes that should be stored in the memory buffer 206. In one embodiment, the unicast routes are selected based on the type of protocol associated with the route. The desired protocol type is identified as "requested" by the MRTM 208. The RTM 205 will then submit the unicast routes associated with that protocol type to the memory buffer 206. Each selected unicast route is stored in the memory buffer 206 using a memory record that preferably contains a minimal amount of routing information. Figure 3 illustrates an exemplary record in the memory buffer used to transfer unicast routes to a multicast routing table in accordance with

an embodiment of the invention.

The memory record 300 stores information related to a unicast route such as network address 301, network mask 302, the weight or cost of the route 303, the next hop neighbor address 304 for the route, the next hop physical interface 305 for the route, the protocol type 306 and the route attributes 307. The information stored in the memory record 300 may be used to modify the attributes of the unicast route using a policy filter 207. Returning to Figure 2, the MRTM sends the unicast routes stored in the memory buffer to the policy filter 207. In one embodiment, the policy filter 207 may be used to remove selected routes or modify the weight or cost value of each route. As discussed above, the weight or preference of the route is used by the MRTM 208 to sort the routes stored in the MRTM routing table 210.

The MRTM 208 reads the stored unicast information from the memory buffer 206 and, as it does with the submitted multicast routes, then determines whether the unicast route should be added, deleted, or updated. The MRTM 208 searches the existing MRTM routing table 210 to determine if the submitted unicast route already has an entry in the MRTM routing table 210. If an entry for the specific unicast route already exists, the MRTM 208 will update the route entry with any changes to the unicast route. In an entry for the specific unicast route does not exist and the route weight associated with the unicast route is not unreachable, then a new entry is created in the MRTM routing table 210 for the injected unicast route. As discussed previously, a route will be removed from the MRTM routing table 210 when the network associated with the unicast route becomes unreachable.

Figure 4 illustrates the flow of control of a method for managing routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols using multicast and unicast routes in a network device in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. At block 401, multicast routes are submitted by routing tables associated with a plurality of multicast routing protocols. The multicast protocols determine the best route or routes for a forwarded multicast packet. As discussed above, a multicast routing protocol, such as DVMRP and MBGP, maintains its own routing table that stores multicast routes known to the multicast routing protocol. Each multicast routing protocol will submit the routes from its routing table to a single multicast routing table. Certain multicast routing protocols also make use of unicast routes. Accordingly, at block 403, a set of unicast routes are selected from a unicast routing table and

transferred to the multicast routing table. In one embodiment, the set of unicast routes are selected based on the unicast protocol associated with the unicast routes. At block 405, the submitted multicast routes and the set of unicast routes are advantageously stored in the multicast routing table. The multicast routing table provides a common location for the multicast and unicast routes to be obtained by each multicast routing protocol. As discussed previously, this reduces the amount of processing time and logic required to determine the desired routes or routes for a multicast packet. At block 407, the multicast routing table is updated with any route changes in the unicast and multicast routes. As discussed with respect to Figure 2, in one embodiment of the invention, the content of the multicast routing table is controlled by a multicast routing table manager.

Returning to block 403, the set of unicast routes must be transferred to the multicast routing table from the unicast routing table. Figure 5 illustrates the flow of control of a method for selecting and injecting unicast routes into a multicast routing table in accordance with an embodiment of the invention. At block 502, the set of unicast routes are selected from a unicast routing table. In one embodiment, the set of unicast routes are selected based on the unicast routing protocol associated with the unicast protocols. At block 504, the set of unicast protocols are stored in a memory buffer. In one embodiment, the memory buffer is a FIFO. As discussed above, with respect to Figure 2, routing information relating to a unicast route is stored in a memory entry. Preferable, the memory entry contains a minimal amount of routing information. Before the unicast routes are transferred to the multicast routing table, at block 508, the set of unicast routes may be modified at block 506 using a policy filter. At block 508, the set of unicast routes are transferred from the memory buffer to the multicast routing table. As mentioned above, it is advantageous to store the multicast routes and unicast routes associated with a plurality of multicast routing protocols in one multicast routing table as opposed to separately maintained routing tables specific to each multicast routing protocol.

In an exemplary embodiment of the invention, the MRTM is managed through a Management Information Base (MIB). The MIB defines various management objects for configuring and controlling various multicast route management functions. Specifically, an exemplary MIB defines management objects for configuring and controlling various multicast route management functions. Specifically, an exemplary MIB defines management objects

for configuring and controlling the selection and injection of unicast routes, the submission of multicast routes and the creation of a MRTM routing table.

An exemplary MIB for configuring and controlling the MRTM is shown in Figures 6A-6G. The MIB defines various management objects, some of which are organized as tables within the MIB. Specifically the MIB defines a MRTM Inject Route Table (wfIpMrtmInjectRtTable) and a MRTM routing table (wfMRTM).

The MRTM Inject Route Table (wfIpMrtmInjectRtTable) is used to configure and control the policy rules governing the injection of unicast routes into the MRTM routing table. Each MRTM Inject Route Table entry corresponds to a particular unicast route injection policy rule, and includes a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtDelete) to create or delete a route entry, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtDisable) to enable or disable a route entry, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtIndex) indicating a rule index number, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtName) indicating the specified name for the rule, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtNetworks) indicating the list of networks that match the rule, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtAction) to accept or ignore a route, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtPreference) indicating the preference associated with a route, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtPrecedence) indicating a precedence value for the rule, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtInject) indicating a network replacement list, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtInterface) indicating an injected unicast routes inbound circuit, a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRtType) indicating a unicast route type to be selected from the RTM, and a management object (wfIpMrtmInjectRt Metric) indicating the cost of the route to be injected into the MRTM routing table.

The exemplary MIB of Figures 6E-6G also defines management objects to configure and control the MRTM (routing) table (wfMrtm) and includes a management object (wfMrtmCreate) to create or delete the MRTM logic, a management object (wfMrtmEnable) to enable or disable the MRTM logic, a management object (wfMrtmState) indicating the current state of the entire MRTM, a management object (wfMrtmDebug) for generating log messages, a management object (wfMrtmHoldDownTime) indicating how long a route will be held in the MRTM table after it becomes unreachable, a management object (wfMrtmFifoSize) indicating the size of the FIFO used to transfer unicast routes from the RTM to the MRTM, a management object (wfMrtmEstimatedNetworks) indicating the

estimated number of routes the router will need to keep in its routing table, a management object (wfMrtmMaxRoutes) indicating the maximum number of routes per slot, and a management object (wfMrtmActualRoutes) indicating the total actual entries currently in the routing table.

5 In a preferred embodiment of the invention, predominantly all of the logic for aggregating and maintaining routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network device is implemented as a set of computer program instructions that are stored in a computer readable medium and executed by an embedded microprocessor system within the router. Preferred embodiments of the invention may be implemented in any conventional  
10 computer programming language. For example, preferred embodiments may be implemented in a procedural programming language (e.g., "C") or an object oriented programming language (e.g., "C++"). Alternative embodiments of the invention may be implemented using discrete components, integrated circuitry, programmable logic used in conjunction with a programmable logic device such as a Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) or  
15 microprocessor, or any other means including any combination thereof.

Alternative embodiments of the invention may be implemented as a computer program product for use with a computer system. Such implementation may include a series of computer instructions fixed either on a tangible medium, such as a computer readable media (e.g., a diskette, CD-ROM, ROM, or fixed disk), or fixed in a computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave that is transmittable to a computer system via a modem or other  
20 interface device, such as a communications adapter connected to a network over a medium. The medium may be either a tangible medium (e.g., optical or analog communications lines) or a medium implemented with wireless techniques (e.g., microwave, infrared or other transmission techniques). The series of computer instructions preferably embodies all or part  
25 of the functionality previously described herein with respect to the system. Those skilled in the art should appreciate that such computer instructions can be written in a number of programming languages for use with many computer architectures or operating systems. Furthermore, such instructions may be stored in any memory device, such as semiconductor, magnetic, optical or other memory devices, and may be transmitted using any  
30 communications technology, such as optical, infrared, microwave, or other transmission technologies. It is expected that such a computer program product may be distributed as a

removable medium with accompanying printed or electronic documentation (*e.g.*, shrink wrapped software), preloaded with a computer system (*e.g.*, on system ROM or fixed disk), or distributed from a server or electronic bulletin board over the network (*e.g.*, the Internet or World Wide Web).

5           It should be noted that the term "packet" is used herein generically to describe various protocol messages that are processed by a communication device, and should not be construed to limit application of the present invention to a specific protocol message format or communication protocol. Thus, a "packet" may be any protocol message including, but not limited to, a frame, a packet, a datagram, a user datagram or a cell.

10           It should also be noted that the terms "router" and "switch" are used herein generically to describe any of a variety of devices that implement the described protocols and procedures for forwarding a multicast packet, and should not be construed to limit application of the present invention to any specific type of device.

15           Thus, the present invention may be embodied as a method for aggregating and maintaining routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network device that includes a routing table for each of the plurality of multicast routing protocols. The method involves receiving routes from each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols, storing the routes in a single multicast routing table and updating the multicast routing table based on changes made by the plurality of multicast routing protocols to the routes stored in each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols.

20           The present invention may be embodied as an apparatus for aggregating and maintaining routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network device that includes a routing table for each of the plurality of multicast routing protocols. The device includes receiving logic for receiving routes from each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols, a multicast routing table for storing the routes received from each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols, and multicast routing table management logic for updating the multicast routing table based on the changes made by the plurality of multicast routing protocols to the routes stored in the routing tables for the plurality of multicast routing protocols.

25           The present invention may also be embodied as a computer program product comprising a computer readable medium having embodied therein a computer program for

aggregating and maintaining routing information for a plurality of multicast routing protocols in a network device that includes a routing table for each of the plurality of multicast routing protocols.. The computer program includes program code for receiving routes from each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols, program code for storing the  
5 routed in a single multicast routing table and program code for updating the multicast routing table based on changes made by the plurality of multicast routing protocols to the routes stored in each routing table for the plurality of multicast routing protocols.

The present invention may be embodied as a communication system comprising at least one multicast device for forwarding multicast packets using a plurality of multicast  
10 routing protocols. The multicast device includes a single multicast routing table for storing multicast routes for the plurality of multicast routing protocols. Multicast routing table management logic updates the multicast routing table based on changes made by the plurality of multicast routing protocols to the routes stored in the multicast routing table.

Although various exemplary embodiments of the invention have been disclosed, it  
15 should be apparent to those skilled in the art that various changes and modifications can be made which will achieve some of the advantages of the invention without departing from the true scope of the invention. These and other obvious modifications are intended to be covered by the appended claims.